

## Responding to COVID-19: Highlights of a Survey in LIBERIA

### Summary

- Almost all Liberians know about COVID-19, its transmission, and the importance of regular handwashing. However, knowledge of symptoms is low.
- The majority support the government's response to the pandemic and have trust in information coming from the government.
- Liberians agree with interventions to stop the spread of the virus, though a large minority is opposed to the closing of transportation and markets.
- Liberians believe that COVID-19 will be a big problem for their country, and many believe that contracting COVID-19 would have a severe impact on their health
- Radio is by far the most important media channel in Liberia.

### Background

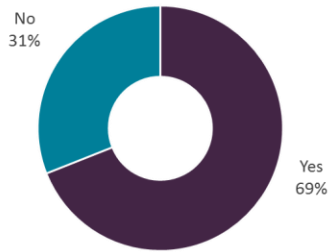
Public health social measures (PHSMs) are an important strategy to delay and reduce the magnitude of COVID-19. PHSMs particularly those that restrict movement or entail the closure of services, can place a significant burden on populations. The effective implementation of PHSMs will require public support and compliance. Hence, this survey was conducted to assess public support for, and the likely social impacts of PHSMs in Liberia.

### Key Findings of the Survey

#### While awareness of COVID-19 is high, knowledge of symptoms is limited

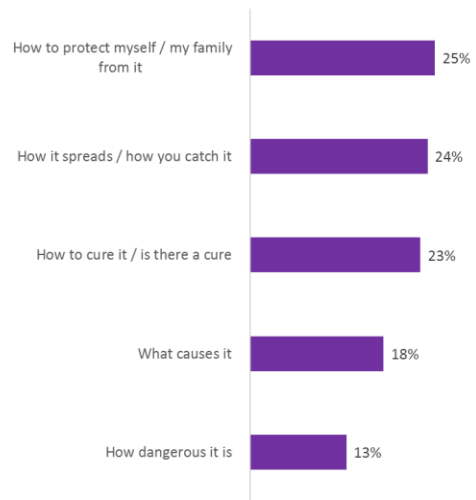
- Awareness of COVID-19 is almost universal at 99%.
- The most common associations with COVID-19 are 'a sickness, illness, or disease' (47%), 'killer, deadly disease / serious' (43%), and 'a virus' (38%). To a lesser degree, it is also seen as 'a respiratory illness, affects lungs or breathing, causes pneumonia' (22%).
- The perceived symptoms of COVID-19 are a dry cough (65%), fever (53%), and difficulty breathing, shortness of breath (44%).
- Seven in ten Liberians (69%) feel they have enough information about COVID-19.
- Nevertheless, one in four (25%) would like further information on 'how to protect myself/my family from it' and a similar share would like information on 'how it spreads/how you catch it' (24%) and 'how to cure it/is there a cure' (23%).

Q10. Do you feel you currently have enough information about the coronavirus/Covid-19 situation?



% who feel they have enough information	
<b>Gender:</b>	
Male	71
Female	67
<b>Age:</b>	
18-25 years	64
26-35 years	68
36-45 years	73
46-55 years	70
56 and older	70
<b>Monthly Household Income:</b>	
\$0-100	68
\$101-200	69
\$201-500	83
\$501+	86

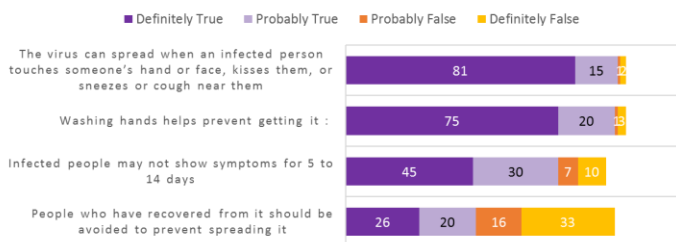
Q11. What are the two things about it that you would like most to have more information about? [Top five mentions]



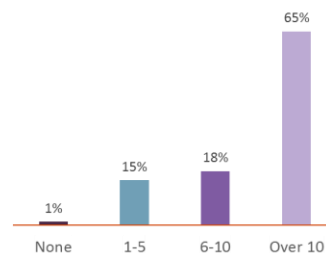
### Awareness of modes of transmission and the benefit of handwashing is high, though there is also widespread misbelief about the virus

- Almost all think COVID-19 can be spread by touch, kiss, sneeze, or cough (96%, including 81% thinking this is 'definitely true') and that washing hands helps prevent getting it (95% including 75% 'definitely true'). Three-quarters believe that infected people may not show symptoms for up to 14 days (76%) and just under half (47%) believe that people who have recovered from it should be avoided to prevent spreading it.
- Three in five (62%) think 'you can prevent it by drinking lemon and vitamin C' and a similar proportion think that 'hot climate prevents spread' (59%). Just under half (46%) think 'you can cure it with garlic' while one-quarter (25%) believes 'Chinese-made hair weaves can be infected with coronavirus'. One in five believes that 'Africans can't get it' and the same proportion believe 'you might get it from any Chinese person in your country' (both 21%).
- Almost two-thirds (65%) stated they washed their hands 10+ times in the day prior to their interview.

Q14. I'm going to read things people have said about coronavirus or Covid-19. Please tell me if you think each is definitely true, probably true, probably false, or definitely false. (%)



Q40. Yesterday, how many times did you wash your hands with soap or use hand sanitizer?

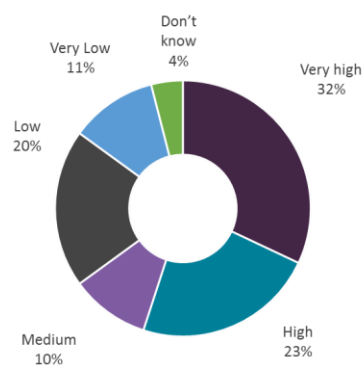


Q14. Share who agree definitely/probably true (%)	Gender		Age					Monthly Household Income			
	Male	Female	18-25 years	26-35 years	36-45 years	46-55 years	56 and over	\$0-100	\$101-200	\$201-500	\$501+
The virus can spread when an infected person touches someone's hand or face, kisses them, or sneezes or cough near them	96	96	95	96	98	94	99	98	95	98	98
Washing hands helps prevent getting it	95	96	94	96	96	94	97	95	97	95	91
Infected people may not show symptoms for 5 to 14 days	79	73	74	77	75	76	74	77	78	82	80
People who have recovered from it should be avoided to prevent spreading it	44	49	51	46	47	42	45	50	42	49	48

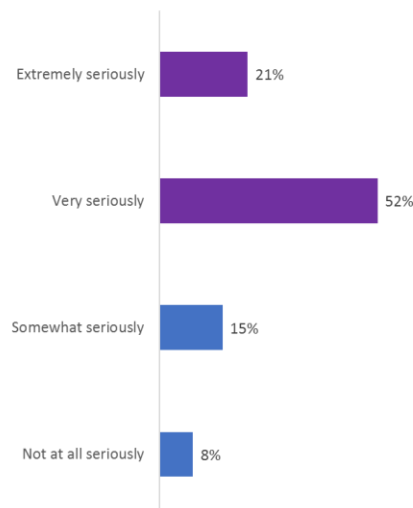
**64% of Liberians perceive COVID-19 as a problem for their country; 55% believe they are at risk of catching COVID-19.**

- Almost two-thirds (64%) anticipate that the Coronavirus will be a ‘big problem’ in their country, with only 4% expecting it will be ‘not much of a problem.’ Lower earners are more likely to see it as a big problem than higher earners.
- More Liberians consider themselves at high risk of catching COVID-19 than at low risk (55% versus 31%). In particular, around in one in three (32%) consider themselves at ‘very high’ risk. This is consistent across gender and age groups.
- In line with this high perception of being at risk, nearly three-quarters think that catching the virus would seriously affect their health (73%, including 21% ‘extremely seriously’).
- The most commonly cited rationale for understanding the perceived effect on health is ‘it could kill me/make me very sick’ (56%), followed by a perception that ‘it seems serious’ (20%).
- Seven in ten (70%) are confident about being able to immediately get the help they need versus one in four (27%) who are not confident.

Q5. Please indicate what you think your level of risk of catching coronavirus or Covid-19 is?



Q6. If you were infected by coronavirus or Covid-19, how seriously do you think it would affect your health?

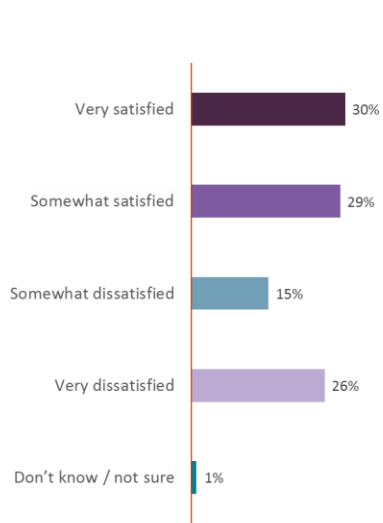


% who think coronavirus would affect their health extremely seriously/very seriously:	
<b>Gender:</b>	
Male	73
Female	73
<b>Age:</b>	
18-25 years	73
26-35 years	73
36-45 years	72
46-55 years	72
56 and older	74
<b>Monthly Household Income:</b>	
\$0-100	77
\$101-200	73
\$201-500	62
\$501+	75

**A majority of Liberians are satisfied with governmental response to COVID-19 and are trusting of disseminated information**

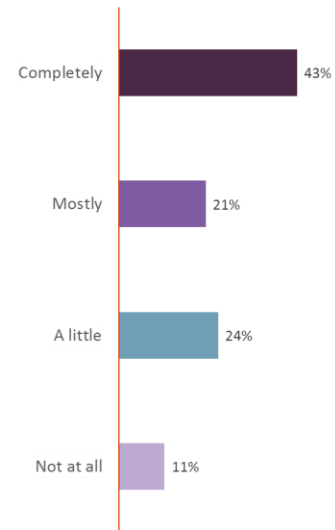
- On balance, Liberians are more likely to be satisfied with the government’s response to COVID-19 than not (58% versus 41% dissatisfied).
- Almost two-thirds (64%) indicate they trust information from the government, including 43% who ‘completely’ trust it.

Q12. How satisfied are you with the government's response to coronavirus or Covid-19?



% who are very/somewhat satisfied with government's response :	
<b>Gender:</b>	
Male	57
Female	59
<b>Age:</b>	
18-25 years	53
26-35 years	55
36-45 years	65
46-55 years	59
56 and older	58
<b>Monthly Household Income</b>	
\$0-100	59
\$101-200	58
\$201-500	58
\$501+	66

Q13. How much do you trust information from the government about the coronavirus or Covid-19?



### Strong support for Public health social measures (PHSMs)

- Almost all Liberians support stopping handshake/kiss greetings (94%). Fewer, but still a significant majority, also support requiring those who have contact with infected people to self-isolate (72%) and those with COVID-19 to remain home until they are well (69%).

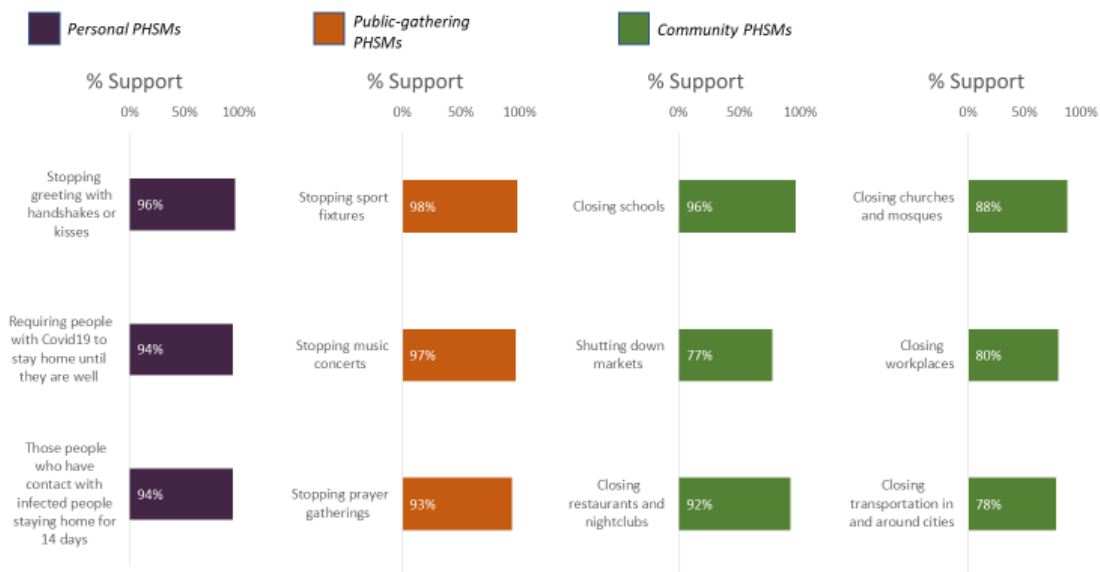
### Liberians also support restricting public gatherings

- Support is almost universal for restricting public gatherings to help limit a COVID-19 outbreak by stopping sport fixtures (97%) and music concerts (95%). While still strongly in favor, fewer say they support stopping prayer gatherings (72%).
- The most frequently cited way to make prayer or religious gatherings easier would be radio broadcasts (55%), followed by services on TV or Internet (24%).

### There is majority support – in some cases strong support – for closures to prevent the spread of the virus

- Nine in ten support the closure of schools (94%) and closing restaurants and nightclubs (90%) to curb the spread of COVID-19.
- Fewer, but still a clear majority, support closing workplaces (71%) and closing churches or mosques (70%).
- Just over half support closing transportation in and around cities (57%), and a similar proportion support shutting down markets (54%).

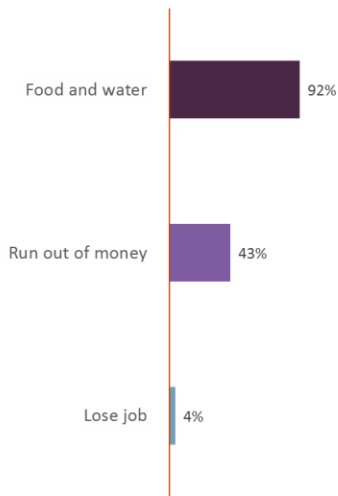
## Level of support for Public health social measures (PHSMs) by type of intervention



### Quarantine measures would have a strong impact on access to food and water, but a more limited impact on employment

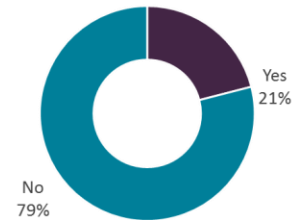
- One in three Liberians (32%) works outside the home, while 54% indicate they are not working. Of those employed outside the home, nearly four in five (78%) believe that their workplace could accommodate staggered shifts.
- One in five (21%) have a separate room to isolate someone who becomes sick. This proportion increase as monthly household income rises.
- Nine in ten (92%) indicate that food and water would be a problem if they had to be at home for 14 days. Fewer, but nevertheless an important minority, say they would run out of money (43%), very few (4%) believe they would lose their job.
- If asked to stay at home, on median average, Liberians would need to get both food and money after 5 days.

Q17: What would be the biggest problems for people like you to stay at home for 14 days?



Share who think the following would be the biggest problem... (%)	Food and water	Running out of money	Losing your job
<b>Gender:</b>			
Male	90	45	4
Female	93	41	3
<b>Age:</b>			
18-25 years	92	41	1
26-35 years	91	43	4
36-45 years	91	44	4
46-55 years	93	43	6
56 and older	94	44	4
<b>Monthly Household Income:</b>			
\$0-100	92	46	4
\$101-200	93	39	5
\$201-500	85	47	9
\$501+	86	39	0

Q38. Would you have a separate room in your home to keep someone isolated if they are sick?



**Radio is by far the most common media source relied on**

- Liberians report normally getting information about what is happening in the country through local radio (74%), followed by social media (29%).
- In line with this, the most frequently used media channel is radio (65%), followed by Facebook (18%). Fewer than one in ten (7%) cite television as the media channel they use most in a week.

**Technical Note**

The fieldwork on this study was conducted by Ipsos with results based on 1,059 interviews with adults aged 18+ in Monrovia. Fieldwork was administered by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) using a Random Digit Dial (RDD) approach incorporating both landline and mobile sample. Data are representative of the populations of the urban area (s) included and are unweighted. Fieldwork took place between April 4 and April 7, 2020.

This program of research is an outcome of a partnership between Resolve to Save Lives, an initiative of Vital Strategies, Africa CDC, the World Health Organization’s African Regional Office (AFRO) and Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO), and the World Economic Forum to form a new public-private partnership to support evidence-based implementation of NPIs to reduce COVID-19 transmission in African countries (“flattening the curve”) while working with governments to mitigate social and economic disruption and other unintended consequences.